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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

11. Sinai Bombings

12. Mideast

13. Mordechai Vanunu

Key stories in the media:

In its lead story, Ha'aretz quoted senior US administration officials in Washington as saying in unofficial conversations that the US will not recognize a border created after a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank as Israel's permanent border. The newspaper reported that a discussion of Interim PM Ehud Olmert's plan of a unilateral pullout, as promised to his voters, is at a very preliminary stage. However, Ha'aretz quoted a number of sources as saying unofficially that they believed the administration would probably support such a withdrawal, but that it would not recognize it as one "after which there would be no more need for negotiation," according to one source. One official was quoted as saying that he believed the US would agree to see the post-withdrawal line as a temporary border, "which would become permanent, obviously with slight changes, following future negotiations between Israel and the PA." Ha'aretz quoted sources in Washington as saying they believed the US would want to maintain a united European-American front on the issue. The newspaper quoted an administration source as saying: "We need them for too many things; we won't get into a conflict with them over this issue." Ha'aretz quoted a source in Washington as saying that if the Israeli withdrawal receives the blessing of the international community, "it will be assuming that any reduction of the occupation is good for both sides, but it certainly won't be support for a new border."

Israel Radio reported that Egyptian security forces have identified the three suicide bombers who carried out Monday's attacks in Dahab. The radio cited the Egyptian daily Al-Gumhuriya as saying that five suspects, who probably belong to the Al-Jihad Wa-Al-Tawhid organization that carried out the Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh attacks, have been arrested. Israel Radio quoted the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram as saying that three suspects were arrested in central Sinai, in addition to ten others who were apprehended earlier. The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli security officials as reiterating that Al Qaida and Global Jihad are slowly closing in on Israel and that they are attempting to establish cells in the Palestinian territories.

Major media reported that on Tuesday, Abu-Mussab Al-Zarqawi, the head of Al Qaida in Iraq, released a videocassette in which he threatens Israel for the first time. Al-Zarqawi was quoted as saying that the "crusade" in Iraq helps Israel. Maariv headlined: "Zarqawi: The Jews Will Not Enjoy Peace."

Both Yediot and Maariv led with criticism expressed by

senior members of the Labor Party of party chairman and designated defense minister Amir Peretz. Israel Radio reported that Kadima and the Labor Party have agreed to implement the recommendations of the Sasson report on illegal settler outposts. The radio reported that the Labor Party demands that the new government prevent the revocation of the citizenship of Israeli Arabs, a demand rejected by Yisrael Beiteinu. Israel Radio said that Kadima and Yisrael Beiteinu are still divided over political issues. Ha'aretz reported that Yisrael Beiteinu and Kadima are fighting over the interior ministry portfolio. Israel Radio expected that pending last-minute difficulties, Kadima is expected to sign a coalition agreement with the Gil Pensioners' Party today. The radio reported that Gil Pensioners' Party leader Rafi Eitan is expected to become pensioners minister -- a new post in the Prime Minister's Office -- and that Gil MK Yaakov Ben Yizri is slated to become health minister.

Israel Radio reported that on Tuesday MK Azmi Bishara, the leader of the Israeli Arab faction Balad-National Democratic Assembly, met with Palestinian FM Mahmoud Zahar in Doha, Qatar. The radio cited an announcement by the Palestinian Foreign Ministry, which stated that the two discussed ways to break the siege imposed by the US and Israel on the Palestinian people.

Israel Radio reported that this morning, Olmert will convene an urgent debate regarding the separation fence and the "Jerusalem envelope" fence. The radio said that only 335 km of the proposed 870-km security fence are currently operational. The Jerusalem Post reported that Orit Koren of the State Attorney's Office told the High Court of Justice on Sunday that there have been 82 attempts by suicide bombers to enter Israel through the gaps in the separation fence since the beginning of 2006.

Ha'aretz cited the Ir Amim advocacy group as saying that right-wing nonprofit associations are building the new Judea and Samaria [i.e. West Bank] District Police building in the El corridor between Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim. In exchange they are said to receive the current police building, located in the heart of the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Ras al-Amud. Ha'aretz reported that Ir Amim made this claim in a petition to the High Court of Justice against the construction of the new station.

Israel Radio quoted PA Finance Minister Omar Abdel Razek as saying Tuesday that banks fearful of U.S. retribution are preventing USD 120 million in foreign aid from reaching the Palestinians. The radio reported that Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono called for the resumption of financial aid to the Palestinians.

Yediot reported that on Tuesday, Hamas pointed a finger at Jordan for surrendering to Israeli and US pressure by taking part in a campaign against it. The newspaper said that Hamas's statement was a response to Jordan's announcement that a Hamas cell that originated in Syria received instructions to carry out operations against senior Jordanian figures. Israel Radio quoted Palestinian sources as saying that Imad El-Alami, the commander of Hamas's military wing, gave the order to eliminate those figures. El-Alami is based in Tehran and has recently been residing in Damascus. Israel Radio earlier cited the Lebanese newspaper Al-Mustaqbal as saying that it was Khaled Mashal, the head of Hamas's political bureau, who had given orders to assassinate the Jordanian officials.

Major media reported that the Israeli satellite Eros-B (not Adom-B, as the media reaction report erroneously reported on April 14) was successfully launched from a mobile launch-pad at the Svobodny cosmodrome in Siberia. Media quoted officials as saying that the satellite would enhance Israel's ability to spy on and follow developments at Iran's nuclear facilities. Maariv quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying that Israel relies first and foremost on itself.

Ha'aretz and Maariv's online service NRG reported that a 17-year-old Palestinian was critically wounded Tuesday by IDF gunfire in Nablus. Israel Radio reported that Border Police uncovered an important cache of weapons in the village of El-Majd near Hebron.

The Jerusalem Post and other media cited the Jerusalem Municipality as saying Tuesday that it has authorized 17 construction plans for Arab building in East Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Post wrote that this was an "unusual move."

Yediot reported that on Thursday, "Aqua," a new fund investing in water infrastructure around the world, was launched by the Israeli company Solomon Energy. Aqua was bought from Israel's largest bank, Bank Hapoalim, and has already issued 30 million shekels (approximately USD 6.6 million) worth of shares.

Israel Radio reported that the New Israel Fund NGO urges the GOI not to deport 100 refugees from Darfur.

The Jerusalem Post reported that this week US Ambassador to Israel Richard Jones attended the traditional Mimouna festivities as a guest of the Baba Baruch Abuhatzeira in Netivot.

I. Sinai Bombings:

Summary:

Arab affairs correspondent Jackie Hoogie wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The covert contest that Egypt declared against Israel over Middle East hegemony is currently being pushed aside."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Ultimately, Arabs, Israelis, Americans, and Europeans must either join to defeat the Islamist jihad, or fall together."

Block Quotes:

I. "Rapprochement Due to Terror"

Arab affairs correspondent Jackie Hoogie wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (4/26): "As time goes by, and indiscriminate terror expands its range of targets, Egypt and Israel draw closer to one another.... It is true that we should thank the Americans for the free trade zone agreement [with Egypt], and thank Sharon's bureau for removing the barriers to the gas deal. But with all due respect to them, the strategic rapprochement between Cairo and Jerusalem is being caused by the pincer movement that envelops the two together. This is evident in three areas. For over two years, Egypt and Israel have been fellow sufferers in the area of terrorism, but lately this trend was significantly strengthened.... In addition, the two countries have only recently felt the touch of burgeoning Islam.... A new cloud should be added to all of this. The 'Shi'ite bomb' is not only Israel's problem. The Egyptians, along with all the Arab states, view this as a danger to their sovereignty. A nuclear Iran would be a regional power and would overshadow Egypt's standing, as well as Israel's.... Israel has long since ceased to be the severest problem of the Arab regimes. The covert contest that Egypt declared against Israel over Middle East hegemony is currently being pushed aside. In its stead, our neighborhood is being divided into two camps: The fundamentalists, and all the rest. The second camp includes figures, entire societies and regimes, even those who were considered enemies -- Israel and Saudi Arabia, for example. In the past year, Lebanon has also joined this club, thanks to al-Qaida in Iraq.... Shimon Peres was right. It is indeed a new Middle East. But he was also wrong. For our region does not match his vision. This is a Middle East where the molecules are arranging themselves in a different order than we have become accustomed to for decades."

II. "Jihad in Sinai"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/26): "Unlike Hamas, the more moderate Arab states, such as Egypt, have some time ago given up the attempt to distinguish between 'good' terrorism against Jews and 'bad' terrorism against Arabs. Egypt is even reportedly pressuring Hamas to take steps toward recognizing Israel's right to exist. But Monday's bombings in Sinai demonstrate the untenability of the continuing Arab attempt to straddle the worlds of radicalism and democracy, of war and peace. The tool of terrorism, whose use against Israel was once enthusiastically endorsed by the entire Arab world, has now been turned against Arabs themselves. Most of the casualties on Monday were Egyptians, none of those killed were Israelis.... The goal of the Islamists is a Taliban-like regime stretching across the entire Arab world; a vast dictatorship bent on subduing the Arab peoples and the West as well. For the Arab governments, the best antidote to this threat is not further crackdowns and attempts to keep the embers of the Arab-Israeli conflict alive, but rather the

opposite: domestic liberalization and full normalization with Israel.... There is no neutral place for the Arab world in the militant Islamist war against the West; this is part of the message of the latest massacre in the Sinai. That jihad will either be defeated by Muslims themselves and the West, or it will engulf the Arab world and the West. Ultimately, Arabs, Israelis, Americans, and Europeans must either join to defeat the Islamist jihad, or fall together."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "We can hear the voices of the generals who promise to respond mightily to Qassam rocket fire. In the meantime, everything remains the same -- idle talk."

Block Quotes:

"All Red Lights Are Switched On"

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (4/26): "No one intends to create a panic, but -- believe me -- former [Israeli] generals, who are balanced and reasonable, believe that Israel is under a real existential threat. They say so in circles of friends -- it's a shame they don't have the courage to speak out openly.... During the Yom Kippur War, we saw how promises made by generals melted; only a heavenly miracle allowed the crossing of the Suez Canal and the reversal of the battle's outcome. Today as well, we can hear the voices of the generals who promise to respond mightily to Qassam rocket fire. In the meantime, everything remains the same -- idle talk. In those circumstances, it is only natural that prime minister-designate Ehud Olmert should act courageously and resolutely and reject irrelevant demands made by the leeches [i.e. Olmert's prospective coalition partners]."

13. Mordechai Vanunu:

Summary:

Intelligence affairs correspondent Yossi Melman wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The state claims that [Mordechai] Vanunu remains a tangible risk to its security. That is a baseless argument, worrisome, immoral and unjust."

Block Quotes:

"Let Him Go Already"

Intelligence affairs correspondent Yossi Melman wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/26): "Almost secretly, with the information modestly tucked away in

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the margins of the news, the [Israeli] Justice Ministry has extended by a year the strict limitations imposed on Mordechai Vanunu.... The state claims that Vanunu remains a tangible risk to its security. That is a baseless argument, worrisome, immoral and unjust. It is baseless because Vanunu stopped working at the Dimona nuclear reactor more than 20 years ago.... In any case, Vanunu speaks about what the world already knows and continues to know: Israel is a nuclear power. Morally and legally, and from a democratic perspective, it is intolerable that someone who has been punished should be punished over and over again for the same sin for which he served such a heavy sentence. It should be remembered that it is precisely through the same argument of knowing state secrets that the Soviet Union prevented Jewish scientists from immigrating to Israel. By the same logic that guides the defense establishment and the judicial system, as long as Vanunu's memory works, he can never leave Israel."

JONES